

# Adult Overweight and Obesity

## Summary of Significant Trends:

The 2001 report, *The Surgeon General's Call To Action To Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity* identified overweight and obesity as major public health problems. The number of obese persons has doubled since 1980 with nearly one-third of all adults now classified as obese and 61% as overweight (BMI>25). Thirty-one percent of adults, 20 years of age and over have a BMI of 30 or greater compared to 23 percent in 1994. Overweight among adolescents has tripled since 1980. Prevalence continues to rise. More adult women are obese (33%) than men (28%). In women, overweight and obesity are higher among members of racial and minority populations than in non-Hispanic white women. There is practically no difference in obesity rates among men based on race/ethnicity. Individuals with less than a high school education had higher rates of obesity. Only 3 percent of all Americans meet at least four of the five federal Food Guide Pyramid recommendations for intake of grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy products and meats. Fewer than one-third of Americans meet the recommendations to engage in physical activity for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week. This obesity epidemic has profound health implications. Obesity increases a person's risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and some types of cancer.

The Surgeon General includes breathing problems, arthritis, and reproductive complications as other health consequences of obesity. Approximately 300,000 U.S. deaths a year currently are associated with overweight. In 2000 the total direct and indirect economic costs of overweight and obesity was \$117 billion.

## Emerging Trends and Issues:

If these trends continue to rise and are not addressed by the public, the results will be devastating to the health of our country and the healthcare system.

One of the possible causes of exculpatory overweight and obesity rates is the increase in food portion sizes in both restaurants and at home. Nielsen and Popkin, (2003) determined trends and patterns in portions sizes by type of food, where it was eaten and whether portion sizes eaten outside the home were similar to those eaten at home. Nine key food items were studied. Between 1977 and 1996 the portion size (and calorie intake) increased for all but one of the key food items. The largest portion sizes were found in fast food restaurants. Smiciklas-Wright et al. (2003) compared portion sizes for 107 foods from national dietary data collected in 1989-91 and again in 1994-96. There were significant increases in portion sizes for about one-third of the foods examined.

## Relevance of Trends to County Programs:

Overweight and obesity can be addressed with lifestyle changes in diet and physical activity. Counties provide credible information to assist individuals in making lifestyle changes. Behavioral and environmental factors are large contributors to overweight and obesity. They are areas that extension education can lead to positive outcomes in decreasing incidence of overweight and obesity.

The Moving Toward a Healthier You curriculum developed at NCSU addresses both food behavior and physical activity. Recent studies show that portion sizes for food are increasing in size both at home and in fast food restaurants. Extension can provide education to help consumers resize their food choices. To address this epidemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week to maintain good health and 60 minutes to achieve significant weight loss.

## Sources of Supporting Data:

The BMI is a single number that evaluates an individual's weight in relation to height. Weight in kilograms is divided by the square of height in meters ( $wt/(ht)^2$ )

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity>  
*The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity.*

<http://www.byten2nutrition.net>  
Moving Toward a Healthier You weight management curriculum. FCS, NCSU

Nielsen, S.J. and Popkin, B.M. Patterns and trends in food portion sizes, 1977-1998. JAMA: 289(4), 2003.

Smiciklas-Wright, H. et al. Foods commonly eaten in the United States, 1989-1991 and 1994-1996: Are portion sizes changing? J Am Diet Assoc: 103(1), 2003.

Young, L. R. and Nestle, M. The contribution of expanding portion sizes to the US obesity epidemic, AJP: 92(2), 2002.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa>  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention web site.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/releases>  
News releases from the National Center for Health Statistics web site.

<http://www.nutrition.gov>

<http://healthfinder.gov>

<http://www.usda.gov/cnpp>

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic>

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health>

[http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/  
FoodReview/dec2002](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/FoodReview/dec2002)

770-488-5131 or 5820 Call to receive advance copies of electronic maps showing state-by-state prevalence of obesity.

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2003



Family & Consumer  
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